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ABSTRACT

Arranged into three parts, the paper offers practical and motivating techniques for resource persons, particularly in legal education, who have been invited to make presentations in the schools. The first part of the paper prepares resource persons for giving successful presentations by increasing their awareness of educational objectives being sought, the background, ages, and level of experience of the audience. The second part addresses activities and strategies designed to gain active participation by involving the students through: (1) brainstorming, to stimulate discussion; (2) rank ordering, to help students identify priorities within their own value system; (3) role playing, to give students personal experience playing the roles of various government officials; (4) hypotheticals, to describe typical situations and elicit appropriate responses; (5) policymaking, to help students learn to formulate policies or rules to be used for specific purposes; (6) questioning, to evoke different responses from students; and (7) field trips, to develop an understanding of how government or the judicial system works. The last part of the paper stresses the importance of concluding remarks in making a lasting impression on the student. (LH)

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EDUCATION IN LAW AND GOVERNMENT

HOW TO BE A HIT WITH STUDENTS

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1981

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SO 014 777

Resource persons, people knowledgeable about the process and structures of law and government, can greatly enrich classroom programs because they bring reality into the school. It is important to remember that such a venture will be successful only to the extent that the resource person is an integral part of the learning program - aware of the educational objectives being sought, the background and ages of the audience and their level of experience.

This booklet provides some questions every resource person needs to ask and some ideas for launching what should be a rewarding experience for everyone.

BATTING PRACTICE

When you have been contacted, be sure to discuss and clarify with the requestor:

WHO — your audience will be, i.e.-age, interests, abilities, and background in the subject area.

WHAT — you are expected to cover in your talk.

WHERE — you are to speak and where you should report upon arrival. Get directions.

WHEN — you are to speak and how much time will be allotted. An opportunity to rehearse your presentation might help.

WHY — you are speaking; what is the purpose of your presentation?

HOW — you will give your presentation; do you need any special set-up or equipment (film projector, etc.)?

These ideas for different age groups may aid you in your presentation.

ELEMENTARY

Have limited attention span and vocabulary, self-centered view of world, and perceive things in a concrete manner.

Suggestions: describe things in concrete terms. Whenever possible, link your subject to situations or experiences the students have had.

JUNIOR HIGH

Increased attention span and vocabulary approaching adult level. Need to be helped to see how the content relates to them personally.

Suggestions: talk about the content in "people" terms. Let the students know you understand where they're coming from. Relate their classroom study to the real world.

HIGH SCHOOL-ADULT

Preparing to assume adult roles. Express interest in the ways government and/or law accomplishes its purposes. Willing to listen to procedural as well as personal information.

Suggestions: discuss how and why law/government relates to them and how they relate to law/government.

These are only general guidelines. Your audience may not fit them. Develop your own game plan and you'll drive in that home run.

IF YOU REQUIRE ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE, PLEASE DON'T HESITATE TO CALL THE PERSON WHO INITIALLY CONTACTED YOU.

GO FOR A HOMER!

Start off with a BANG! It's important to grab your audience's attention right away.

Work closely with the classroom teacher in planning and designing your presentation. The teacher knows what will work best with the class.

What follows are some activities and strategies for INVOLVING the students:

BRAINSTORMING

The brainstorm is a useful classroom strategy because all students, regardless of level of academic achievement, can participate equally. Once you have gathered all the information from the brainstorm, you can react and lead a lively discussion. A critical concern has to do with what you have the class brainstorm about. Your question should be phrased in terms the students will understand.

What do county clerks (or legislators, or mayors, or lawyers) do?

How many ways have you been in contact with the law since you got up this morning?

For what purposes do we pay taxes?

Procedures

Post and explain these briefly to students.

1. Say anything that comes to mind.
2. Piggybacking on the ideas of others is good.
3. Don't evaluate or criticize what others say.
4. When you can't think of anything else, wait a minute and try again.

RANK ORDERING

Rank ordering helps students identify priorities within their own value system and gives them opportunities to explain their choices. The resource person does not take a value position but clarifies errors in fact and probes to get as many alternatives as possible discussed. Again, the items offered for students to rank should be appropriate to their ages and backgrounds.

Which of the following reponsibilities of city councilpersons are most important? a) making laws. b) preparing the budget. c) attending to voters' complaints. d) explaining how the government works. e) making sure laws are properly enforced.

Which of the following acts of vandalism are most serious? a) Opening the hampster cages in the school laboratory and letting the animals out. b) changing a speed limit sign from 30 to 80. c) spray painting an ancient Indian pictograph. d) carving your initials on a restroom wall.

Procedures

Either give each student a sheet of paper on which you have written the question and listed the choices or post the question and choices. Ask students to rank the choices from most to least important or serious (e.g., a-5,b-3,c-1,d-2,e-4). You then go over the choices one by one and discuss!

Another rank ordering strategy involves using a continuum. Ask students to reproduce the continuum line that you draw on the chalkboard. Indicate the polar extremes.

What are the most important characteristics of a county treasurer? a) Friendly. b) Good with figures. c) A good manager. d) Forceful politician. e) A college education.

Most Important _____ Least Important

ROLE PLAYING

Role playing offers an opportunity for students to try their hand at being police officers, state legislators, school board members, or similar government officials. The intent is to assist students to become aware that the tasks these persons face are complex. Decisions often require a careful examination of multiple alternatives.

Procedures

For role playing to be successful, it is necessary to design a situation and assign roles to students.

1. Police officers intervening in a domestic violence situation. Roles might be two police officers, drunk husband, irate wife, two minor children, complaining neighbor.

2. City coucil deciding how city revenues can be cut by ten percent. Roles would include councilpersons with different role identification - female parent, businessperson, minority member, blue collar worker, real estate broker, bank teller.

   It would be useful to supply an actual city budget for the students to work with.

HYPOTHETICALS

Hypotheticals describe typical situations with which law/government officials must deal. They provide opportunities to discuss the kinds of things that should be considered in making a decision or in responding to a problem.

> You are a sheriffs' deputy, patrolling in your squad car. The time is 1:00 a.m. on a Friday in January. The temperature is 8° below zero and there are three inches of snow on the ground. You discover a parked pickup camper in which there are two children, ages about three and five. They are very cold and frightened and the parents are not around. What do you do?
>
> You want to be elected to the office of mayor in this town. You have to develop a campaign strategy that will appeal to many voters. What issues do you think are important and what solutions do you propose?

POLICYMAKING OR RULEMAKING

Policymaking exercises are designed to help students learn to formulate policies or rules to be used for specific purposes. They can focus on the development of policies to deal with recurring real or hypothetical issues underlying such topics as environmental pollution, fair housing, water use, and so on.

Procedures

> Identify, or help students identify, an issue which involves an important conflict of interests for which policies need to be developed. The issue can be stated as a topical question, a hypothetical incident, a student experience, or a current political issue.
>
> Guide students to suggest a number of tentative policies to cover the issue. These can be developed in large group discussion, individually, or in small groups. Followup discussion should focus on clarification of the policies, the interests underlying the policies, and the advantages and disadvantages of each.

QUESTIONING

Different kinds of questions can be used to evoke different responses from students. Which is used depends upon the type of information that will help you get "where you want to go".

Kinds of Questions	Examples
Questions calling for Facts	What happened? Who said what? When did the event occur?
Questions calling for Explanation	Can you rephrase that? What do you mean by..?
Questions calling for Cause and Effect	For what reason(s) do you think that happened? What do you think the consequences of that will be?
Questions seeking Alternatives	Can you think of another way the problem might be solved? Do you think your teachers (or other students, women, the opposing side, Democrats) would think that is a good solution?
Questions challenging a Position	Why do you believe..? What are the major advantages of your position? What disadvantages do you think your position may have?

FIELD TRIPS

Field-trip experiences are helpful in developing an understanding of how government or the judicial system works. These trips are particularly valuable if a resource person structures the experience and explains what is going on and who the various participants are. Students will have questions, so be prepared to answer them as fully as possible. Court tours; visits to the county clerk's assessor's, or treasurer's offices; city council sessions; and so on are all enhanced if someone is available who "knows the ropes."

ONCE YOU GET THEIR ATTENTION YOU WANT TO KEEP IT!

Don't rush through your presentation.

Emphasize key points by repeating or summarizing them.

Maintain eye contact.

Actively involve the students. Ask questions of them and seek help for demonstration.

Give the students some time just to ask you question.

THE 9TH INNING

OR

WRAPPING IT UP!

Your concluding remarks are important if your presentation is to make a lasting impression on the student.

For further information please contact:

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